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NEW LIGHT ON SOME FAMILIAR NEW TESTAMENT PROBLEMS

The study of New Testament thought is entering upon a new phase. The older phase was a close, exegetical study of the New Testament text, with little reference to the life revealed in it, and less reference to any literature outside, excepting the canonical writings of the Old Testament. The phase now opening recognizes that the New Testament is not an isolated field, but is in contact with the surrounding life of Judaism and Hellenism. So New Testament theology is merged into the history of religion, where the emphasis is always upon life, and literature is viewed only as the expression of life. This new phase of study is now coming to consciousness. One indication of it is that German works which ten years ago would have appeared as *neutestamentliche Theologie* now are named *religionsgeschichtliche Forschungen*.

Two of the names most prominent in this newer phase of study are Gunkel and Bousset. Both have contributed to its development by their studies of apocalyptic literature. Bousset's *Religion des Judenthums* is an example of the phase. So is Gunkel's *Die Wirkungen des heiligen Geistes*.

In 1903 Bousset and Gunkel began the publication of a series entitled "Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments." The first volume was Gunkel's *Zum religionsgeschichtlichen Verständnis des Neuen Testaments*. The second volume is Heitmüller's *Im Namen Jesu*.¹ According to the sub-title, the book is especially concerned with the use of the term in the baptismal formula of the early church. The preface raises the question: "What meaning has baptism 'in the name of Jesus' in the oldest Christianity?" The first part of the book is devoted to a linguistic investigation of the formulæ, *ἐν, ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι τῆς*, and *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τῆς* in the New Testament and other early Christian literature, in the LXX, and in profane Greek. For the last, the recently edited ostraka and papyri from Egypt furnish especially rich material. His conclusion (p. 127) is that the reduction of these terms in the modern translations to the dead level of a single term, "to baptize in the name of Christ," is a loss of an important original distinction. The phrases "to baptize *ἐν* and *ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι*" serve as a description of the act of baptism. They affirm that the baptism was performed under the naming

¹ *Im Namen Jesu: Eine sprach- und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum Neuen Testament, speziell zur altchristlichen Taufe*. By Wilhelm Heitmüller. Göttingen, 1903. Pp. 347. M. 9.

of the name of Jesus. To baptize *εἰς τὸ ὄνομα*, on the other hand, indicates the purpose and result of baptism. It affirms that the person baptized has passed into the state of belonging to Jesus. But in this phrase, also, the element of naming the name is contained. The second part of the book discusses the religious significance of this naming. It is here that the characteristics of the *religionsgeschichtliche* school most clearly appear. This part of the book is a study of the "name-philosophy" of the world in which Christianity arose, not only in Judaism, but also in the syncretistic paganism of the first Christian century. The demand that the facts of New Testament life and literature must be explained in the light of the ideas of the time is not, indeed, new; but the older study, somewhat timorously, refused to admit for serious consideration those phases of thought which we now regard as superstitions. As long as New Testament thought was regarded as infallible, and in all departments forming the measure and standard of our own beliefs, such exclusion was natural. New Testament ideas must agree with our own. On the other hand, if the New Testament is the record of what "men of their time" thought, and if that phrase is not empty rhetoric, then we may expect to find in it elements of the superstition common to the time; only the historical student has no use for the word "superstition." That is a word of conscious superiority, used in judgment. He prefers to take the attitude of the interpreter; and so Heitmüller uses Origen's term, "name-philosophy." The name of God stands in the closest connection with the essence of God. It takes part in this essence, participates in the power of God. It not merely represents the thought of God's power; it is a sort of hypostasis of him, a doublet of God. To know this name and to name it over any person or object is to exercise the power of God with respect to that person or object. In the possession of this knowledge one may rule the world. Especially is the Name a power in the conflict with the realm of demons. The naming of the Name, then, is the exercise of objective power. It becomes thus a sacrament "in the Catholic sense." So the naming of Christ in the act of baptism falls under the rubric of a widespread custom, behind which stands a very definite and positive belief. That it was believed in the post-apostolic church to have this power of exorcism our author is easily able to prove by abundant evidence. His claim is that in the New Testament the name of Jesus is also used in this sacramental, magical way. It is certainly not difficult to see such a use of the name in Mark 9:38 and Acts 19:13. These belong to the same class of magic that Simon desired to exercise in Acts 8:18 f. But these were cases outside the Christian community. Heitmüller claims that

within the Christian community the Name was also conceived to have this power; and that baptism was the especial means of the magical working. The baptized person belongs to Christ. He is objectively freed, by the naming of the name of Christ over him, from the power of the evil demons. Baptism, including the use of the Name, was the most powerful means which the Christian church possessed of bringing defeat to the realm of the demons. Certainly this was the case in the post-apostolic church. Baptism was, through the naming of the name of Jesus, "a kind of exorcism." The author maintains that this is also the case in all phases of New Testament thought.

Here, then, the issue is clearly joined. Was baptism considered in the New Testament church to be a magical, or, if one chooses the term, a sacramental act, with actual objective value? Or was it only the symbol of an inner and ethical fact? This raises an old question, but on totally new grounds. One is compelled to say, too, that it puts the burden of proof on those who would disclaim, for the New Testament, the sacramental character of baptism. If the surroundings of the New Testament contain this magical name-philosophy, and if it appears in the later phases of Christianity itself, its absence in the New Testament stands to be proved. It will hardly suffice to press the emphasis on the ethical as against the external in the teaching of Christ, especially as the formula of baptism in Matt. 28:19 is, to speak mildly, of doubtful authenticity. An argument for the ethical character of baptism has a better standing from the Pauline usage. It may be that one must draw a distinction between the conceptions common in the Christian community, and even perhaps between one phase of Paul's own expressions, and the peculiar personal views of Paul, with their strong emphasis on the ethical as over against the external interpretation of religion. The case may be similar to Paul's use of the Spirit, which includes both the ordinary use of the Christian congregations and the use peculiar to himself. Heitmüller plants himself upon Rom., chap. 6, where, it is not difficult to argue, baptism is considered to be the introduction to "a mystical physical-hyperphysical union with Christ" which is best explained by the sacramental sense of baptism. Even so, it does not go without saying that "to be in Christ" expresses for Paul no other idea than the sacramental. It seems to the reviewer that we must sometimes distinguish between the phases of thought which Paul borrowed from his Jewish and primitive Christian surroundings and those which belonged to his own contribution to growing Christian thought; and it may be doubted if Paul himself always saw with perfect clearness the precise shades of difference between them.

Another smaller book by Heitmüller discusses the Pauline teaching regarding both baptism and the Lord's Supper.² He holds here that the difference between symbol and sacrament is modern; that with Paul, as with the ancient world generally, the natural and the ethical were not distinct; that both together form the natural ground for the sacramental, "the characteristic of which is the obscure confounding of the natural and the spiritual in the personal;" but that Paul's sacramental conception of baptism is not in harmony with the central ethical idea of his religion. Kindred ideas are advanced regarding the Lord's Supper. That, also, is with Paul a sacrament. The sacramental character of it does not rest upon the preaching of Jesus. It is incongruous with Jesus' teaching of the Kingdom of God. His words, "This is my body," are to be understood parabolically. The sacramental idea comes into Christianity from the atmosphere of myth and mysticism with which the church was surrounded in the first Christian century. Is, therefore, the real significance of baptism and the Lord's Supper to be limited to the sacramental? Not at all. "There is no doubt that our modern Protestant estimate and value of them" are correct and must go on developing, "but we are thereby abandoning the ruling conceptions of them in Paulinism, and also in the other parts of the New Testament." We venture to suggest that these are books which must be reckoned with by future students of the ordinances of the church.

For the study of the teaching of the New Testament concerning the Holy Spirit there are two problems of prime importance. They are the questions of the origin and content of this teaching as found in the Johannine and in the Pauline writings. Each of these questions has elements of very great difficulty, and upon neither, perhaps, has the last word yet been spoken. The oft-discussed problem of the Pauline teaching is approached once again by Sokolowski.³ His study is described on the title-page as *Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung*. Its preface begins with a reference to that fruitful book of Weinelt's, *Die Wirkungen des Geistes und der Geister im nachapostolischen Zeitalter*, which, while not bearing the name, is itself one of the most important *religionsgeschichtlichen* works that have yet appeared. No part of the biblical doctrine of the Spirit has received so much attention as the Pauline. Sokolowski goes

² *Taufe und Abendmahl bei Paulus: Darstellung und religionsgeschichtliche Beleuchtung*. By Wilhelm Heitmüller. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1903. Pp. 56. \$1.20.

³ *Die Begriffe Geist und Leben bei Paulus in ihren Beziehungen zu einander*. By Emil Sokolowski. Göttingen, 1903. Pp. xii + 284. M. 7.

over the general subject again, but from the point of view of Paul's conception of life. This leads him to minimize the theological problems of the ontology of the Spirit. He is concerned with Paul's theory of the way the Spirit acts upon man rather than with the nature of its relation to God. This changed point of view is characteristic of the history of religion, rather than of theology. The scope of the book will be indicated by an enumeration of its parts: "The Conception of Life;" "Life and Spirit;" "The Method of the Working of the Spirit;" "The Anthropological Pre-suppositions;" "The Origin of the Pauline Conceptions." The last part occupies nearly half the book.

The author's view is that life, in its specific sense, means for Paul the permanent "life eternal." It rests upon the hope of the resurrection and includes a freedom from the present "body of corruption." But life is also a present good. As such, it consists of a condition of moral righteousness which is not conceived as future, but as present, so that one may not say he will be saved and attain life, but, he has been saved and has life. The resurrection life of the future and the ethical life of the present are so united that life means essentially one thing, whether present or future, physical or spiritual; but its unity does not rest on a physical basis. This single life, present and future alike, has its origin in the "life-giving Spirit." Yet the life is not the Spirit of God alone, nor human consciousness alone, but the product of both together. This, then, is the Pauline idea; a unity between life in the present and in the future, and both under the direct guidance of the Spirit. What is the origin of these conceptions of life and the Spirit? The idea that the present life finds its real essence in holiness is Jewish. The idea of a continued life in the future, which with Paul stands unreconciled beside the idea of a resurrection life, is Greek. The life as holiness was thought of in the Old Testament as due to the Spirit. (Rather, the reviewer thinks, the holiness of life in the messianic age was thought of by the Judaism of Paul's time as coming from the Spirit, as in Mark 1:8.) The idea of the Spirit in the present life had a Jewish origin. But Judaism supplied no idea of the Spirit in the future life. The full rounding of Paul's thought of the Spirit is due neither to Jewish nor to Greek thought, but to Paul's own experience. This conclusion is that to which most recent study of this subject is leading, whatever may be its point of departure. The Spirit was in a peculiar sense connected with life, since it was the explanation of experiences.

The theology of the early church is generally as much the outgrowth of experience as the inheritance of a dogma, and that is emphatically true here. On this subject life certainly produced theology. Sokolowski has

approached this problem of life and the Spirit from a somewhat new and decidedly fruitful point of attack.

Brief mention must suffice for two less extensive monographs. One is in the *Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie*, edited by Schlatter and Cremer.⁴ It examines the conceptions of grace in the different phases of New Testament thought, noting their differences. Their common ground lies in the idea that sinful man may enter through Christ into fellowship with God.

The other⁵ is a study of Paul's consciousness of sin; an attempt to reconcile the lofty apostolic consciousness with the deep consciousness of sin. The reconciliation is found in the perpetual inclination of the *σάρξ* toward sin.

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THE ESCHATOLOGY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The extent to which the historical methods are permeating biblical theology is already known to those acquainted with German theological literature of the last ten years. American and English scholars, with one or two exceptions, have not been following very closely along the same paths. It now appears, however, that this condition is changing. Within the past few months there have appeared a number of books which represent the new tendency to apply our knowledge of contemporaneous thought to an understanding and estimate of the teaching of the New Testament, and among them two dealing with the vital matter of eschatology.

The volume by Mr. Muirhead¹ has an elaborate table of contents, which at least names many of the problems connected with the subject. The treatment, as a whole, however, can hardly be called more than sketchy. The volume is composed of lectures given on the Bruce foundation, and is subject to the limitations of its origin. The first lecture considers the pre-suppositions of the study; the second, the relation of the Jewish apocalypses to Jesus; the third, the actual teaching of Jesus concerning the consummation of the Kingdom; and the fourth, inclusively, the Son of man. Such an outline certainly shows a strange perspective and fails to raise the vital

⁴ *Der Begriff der Gnade im Neuen Testament*. By R. Vömel. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann. 1903. Pp. 50.

⁵ *Der Apostel Paulus als armer Sünder. Ein Beitrag zur paulinischen Hamartologie*. By Max Meyer. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann. 1903. Pp. 58.

¹ *The Eschatology of Jesus*. By Lewis A. Muirhead. New York: Armstrong & Son. Pp. xxvii + 224. \$1.50.